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## Revelation

### Chapter 13 - Revealing the Beast Deified by the World The Freedom and Fury of the Beast (vs. 5-10)

**Revelation 13:5-10:** There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.

Well, the more you read in Revelation, the clearer the imagery becomes. So, I think it's important to just hang in there, because the imagery has a purpose. And once again, the main purpose is to cause our emotions to be involved in the desire for the coming of Christ. If, in fact, you don't see the intensity of what is actually happening, then you won't intensely cry out for the Lord. But if you actually see what's behind all of these things that we're seeing in the changing world, then you can't help but say, "Get us out of here." And that is ultimately the purpose of the Book of Revelation for the church.

As you come into Chapter 13, it's talking about the beast. And just to clarify for you, the beast is us. As you come to the end of Chapter 13, just to reiterate, verse 18 reads this way,

(Revelation 13:18) "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six."

So, it's very clear what we're dealing with, and the reason why, of course, you have the three sixes, is "3" is a fullness of testimony, and obviously, "6" is the number of man; it was the day in which he was created. No matter how hard man tries, he can never be a "7" without God. And so, with all of his efforts and with all of his labor, he's still just a beast until he enters into the rest of Christ. And when that happens, then he becomes as God has intended him to become, literally a child of God. So, a wonderful truth as you see in this.

Now, as well, if you would look with me in Chapter 17 of Revelation, you'll see the end of this particular chapter describing some of the imagery. So, the Scripture will describe itself. If in fact something is a metaphor or an image, of something, Scripture will then give you what it was an image of. If it's not, then you take it literally. Some people say, "How do I know if I take it literally or take it figuratively?" Well, I mean, Scripture will tell you. So, it'll use words "like" or "as," or more specifically, it'll go into description of "this meant this," and "this was for this."

This is what you see in verse 11, if you look with me in Revelation 17, as it describes the beast,

(Revelation 17:11) “The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth...”

We won't get into the description of this.

“... and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

(Revelation 17:12) The ten horns which you saw are ten kings...”

So, actually in the text, it's describing what the horns mean. These are leaders, these are powers, and these are authorities. These are 10 kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as the king with the beast for one hour, for a short time. And the reason for this, of course, obviously, and the point is that they're not going to necessarily be kings of nations, but they're going to be delegated their authority like unto terrorists who really don't have nations but have powers.

It says in verse 13,

(Revelation 17:13) “These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

(Revelation 17:14) These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings..."

The Lamb is who? Well, he's telling you, the Lamb is the Lord. So, we know who that is. But the Lamb is a description of His nature. That is to say, He's not a ferocious beast; He comes to save. So, this is the picture.

"... He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

(Revelation 17:15) And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."

So, within the text, He's actually describing now, what is this great sea that you saw the beast come out of? These waters are the peoples and the nations of the world.

(Revelation 17:16) "And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot..."

Now, the beast obviously is a personage, otherwise it wouldn't be hating. So, the beast will hate the harlot. The

harlot is described ultimately as the great city of Babylon. We'll see that in the text.

“... will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.”

In other words, the war machine of man is going to destroy the cities in which people rely upon, is what the text is reading.

(Revelation 17:17) “For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

(Revelation 17:18) The woman (the harlot) whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

So, what is going to be destroyed by this war machine, beast? The cities in which the people rely upon. You'll see that in Chapter 18 where the people are crying out and saying, “All of the things that we've treasured, the valuables, the perfumes, the gold, the treasures, the things of the city,” they start crying because it's all

burning. Who's going to destroy it? But of course, obviously, the beast, or more specifically, the war machine, the people in this realm.

So, a lot of the descriptions are given in Chapter 17. Not as much given in the beginning in Chapter 13, because what He's wanting you to see is this ferocious animal that wants to devour. And where does that come from? Well, you go back to Daniel and it's the description of a number of nations. The nation of Babylon was described as such. The nation of the Medes and the Persians were described as such. The nation of Rome was described as such. Each have their own beasts. It's interesting that when you look at the symbols of nations, ours is like an eagle, which was kind of a part of Babylon as well as the lion. But if you look at the symbols of nations, I can't think of one that has like a muskrat or something like that. Everybody wants something ferocious and something threatening. So, this is what you're seeing in the passage, the way that nations think, "We want to rule, we want to reign, and we want to devour." Even when you think of the British nation that came in, it was part of the Roman

government, and was trying to devour all the other nations in order to rule them. So, of course, that's the nature of nations. And so, Scripture will describe them in beastly forms. In the end time, the world will come together as one beast, a one world government. And this beast will have all of the traits of the beasts before them, like the Babylonians. So, it would be an amalgamation of all these things.

And so, that's why it talks about, as it describes, verse 2, (Revelation 13:2) “And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion...”

It's saying that the world is coming together.

And as the picture is given, of course, a great power is wielded and is given, and there is this sense of man is able to accomplish almost anything, especially if he can in some way convey that he can heal miraculously. Then the world will gladly submit and give homage to the great beast of the world system. So, this is what happens at the beginning of this particular chapter.

As we pick up in verse 5, what begins to happen is not only do we see the origin, and let me back up at the very beginning, as John writes,

(Revelation 13:1) “And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea...”

Once again, as we already said, the sea is the peoples, multitudes, nations, tongues. So, the point of the text is that the beast is coming out of peoples. It's coming out of nations. It's coming out of the world. And this is who we are.

When you think about it, you know, man makes his choices, and God allows him in His grace to make choices. It was actually a gift that God gives us to make choices. We're going to talk about that as we go on. But God gives a gift for man to make choices. From the two “drips” in the garden to the great “sea” of humanity, we've seen that man has consistently made bad choices. And as man consistently makes those bad choices, what begins to happen is that you see a capriciousness and a volatility in their choice. So, this is the reason why the sea is such a

great depiction of humanity, because it's so volatile. You never know what decision they're going to make. You never know which fad they're going to go with. I could have never predicted this last year. I mean, there's just 1,001 things that you see, and you see the choices of man and the restlessness that they have and the inability of them to really respond, but the consistency of them to react to everything. And so, as Scripture will describe, like by every wind and wave of doctrine, they begin to be moved by all these things. And out of this really comes a sense of anxiety and fear. I mean, when you're restless and you have nothing stable, I mean, we have an anchor for our soul both sure and steadfast; but when you're in a world that is always moving and ever fluid, it produces anxiety and it produces paranoia. And out of that paranoia, it produces a kind of self-defense and a self-preservationism that comes out, "We've got to protect ourselves because things are dangerous." And "Oh, what's going to happen next?"

I did something I told you guys not to do. I was watching the news the other day. And the news lady was asking,

and she goes, “Now I saw this,” and she was actually going through the different kinds of masks that we wear. So, she was going through, she goes, “Now, these don't seem to be working.” She goes, “Is this reason for alarm?” And I said to myself, that's exactly the purpose of the news, to get us alarmed. And they're always looking, “Did I find something? Did I find something to scare you? Because if I did, wow, am I going to get a raise this year.” So, the point is that anxiety stirs up a sort of, “We've got to protect ourselves.” And if you watch, out of that desire to protect yourself comes a sense of hostility. “Because if you're not thinking like me to protect yourself, I'm mad at you.” So, this is a picture. A beast will arise out of the volatility of humanity, see? Because this whole idea of self-protectionism comes out of this and self-preservation.

So, as you drop down to verse 5, what now begins to happen is not only is there a clear definition of where this beast comes out of, and a strange phenomenon actually happens, which is that the world, strangely enough, is attracted to this beast because here again, this beast is

angry with them. So, it's hopping on board with their frustrations and their anxieties. So, they, of course, embrace and become a part of that way of thinking.

As we come now into verse 5, and especially as we look down to verse 10, what we're going to see is that God is going to give that beast for a time, 3 1/2 years as we're going to see within the passage, 42 months, 1,260 days, that is oftentimes mentioned in Scripture, God is going to give that beast freedom. Now, this is what's going to be interesting within the text, because that freedom is what is going to be loved so much, and we're going to watch what happens when man is given complete freedom by God. It's interesting.

There's a passage in Psalm 50 where God says, "I kept silent. For a time, you thought I was just like you." He says, "You misunderstand." And Ecclesiastes says all you have to do in order for injustice to grow is for justice to be slow. And once it's held back, then people begin to...

Well, I mean, all you have to do is remove the police from the cities and see if there's any looting. People are always shocked. "I'm shocked," you know? But my thought is,

this is what happens when you give people complete freedom. And this is what we're going to see within this passage. Look, I love freedom. It was the whole reason why I always looked forward to summer. Because I'm going, "No more teachers, and nobody telling me what to do. I can just run the neighborhood rampant," and of course, we would maybe do things that weren't nice. But the point is that everybody likes freedom. And freedom is a great thing. Our country was founded upon it. In fact, our Constitution, if I could just quote it to you, that we're to promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty. That's what our Constitution is based on, to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity as well. So, that's a direct quote from our Constitution at the very beginning. Now, what's also in our Constitution, and to give our forefathers full credit of this, is something that we overlook in the very beginning of the Constitution, and that is this, that our Constitution was based on first the establishment of justice, then the pursuit of these things. However, if you've noticed, we've skipped over the justice and just gone for the freedom. And that's a natural inclination for man. But the beginning

of the Constitution is to establish the justice of this world, and it literally is written within our Constitution. So, the point is that liberty and freedom and emancipation, the absence of restraint and hindrance, something that I guess we all love, the ability to self-govern. But the problem is that freedom is only good if it ultimately brings happiness. Freedom is not good if it doesn't bring happiness, right? If it doesn't bring ultimate happiness, it's not really good. And choice is only good if it's the right choice. You say, "I want choice." I don't know of anybody that celebrated making the wrong choice. In fact, if someone has a freedom to make a choice and they make the wrong choice, and they come back to you and they say, "You know, I wish I never would have decided that." And what they're telling you is, "I wish I never would have had the choice for that." So, many of the things that we celebrate are wonderful things if good is produced through them, and if right is brought about because of them, but if not, then they become destructive. It's one of the things that this passage is going to reveal, because what God is going to do, this great beast of humanity that is now taking control of the world and the government of

this world is now being run by those that are oppressive and trying to get everything that they want. And you go, “Well, what would happen if they could do anything that they wanted to do?” Well, that's this text. What would happen if they could do anything? I mean, take all the restraints away; take the restraints of God away.

I mean, one of the things that you're going to see in 1 Thessalonians is that God is going to take His people out. It tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4. Now, as you read in 2 Thessalonians 2, that once this change in metamorphosis begins to happen, then what begins to move in is the spirit of lawlessness. And why is that true? Because, you know, like Jesus said, “I came to fulfill the Law.” So, the lawful One, Jesus Christ, and His spirit within us is taken out of the world. What do you think is going to happen? Well, let's see. Let's see what happens when the restraints of the love of God is taken out. You know, I know people complain about all the restraints, “Well, those Christians, they think we ought to do nice things and do the right thing. They think that we ought to not

steal,” and very laborious things like that. And so, what did that look like?

If you pick up with me in Chapter 13, it says,

(Revelation 13:5) “There was given to him...”

That is to say the beast, which we're just following the paragraph down.

“There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.”

Now, what's interesting is, and the parallel is, if you back up in Chapter 11 of Revelation, it starts off kind of giving this general picture of what happens there in Jerusalem specifically and how God begins to measure out. And ultimately, He ends in verse 2 that the Gentiles of the world will come into the city of Jerusalem and will tread on it for 42 months. That's the same period of time, which is 3 1/2 years, which is 1,260 days.

So, as you go on, what will happen is, in verse 3, that the first part of that, God will grant to His witnesses to be a

witness unto God for the first 3 1/2 years. The first 3 1/2 years, God will use these two witnesses.

And in fact, it says,

(Revelation 11:3) “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

So, once again, 3 1/2 years. So, it makes reference to this in this chapter. And then when they are murdered, that brings in, as we would say, all hell breaks loose. And then the beast takes control. See, if you look within the passage, it's the beast that slays the two witnesses. So, it's a description of what's going on. So, now, up to this point, God has been gracious, and His word has been manifested in great signs and wonders and miracles. And the only thing that man wanted was His messengers to be dead. The point that's going to be shared within the text is, obviously, it's not the wonders and signs and miracles that men are attracted to. It's the fact that they're attracted to evil rather than good. Because, yes, the beast is going to have some miraculous signs, which are really bogus, but they're going to have miraculous signs. But

they had miraculous signs for 3 1/2 years with the two witnesses, and all they wanted was them dead. So, it's clear that it's not the signs that they're going after. What is it they're going after? Well, man has an insatiable desire to be selfish and to be avaricious. He's greedy, and it's his heart, and that's what he desires to do. So, that creates a viciousness and a hostility. I mean, if you look at the picture of Alexander the Great, you have an insatiable beast that just can't be fed. You go to him and say, "Okay, you were able to conquer your next-door neighbor. Just leave it at that." Alexander goes, "I don't think so. I want the world." See? And that's the nature of this beast.

So, if you go back with me into Chapter 13, the way that it's worded was extremely interesting to me, because what we understand is God is giving, handing over the ability to speak. Actually, we would call this freedom of speech. This is actually what we would call it. So, God has given him freedom to speak. And the way that it's worded, I just want you to know, "There was given to him a mouth..." You know, if God doesn't want you to say anything, He didn't have to give you a mouth. It's a

miraculous thing, and I've oftentimes thought about the fact that here Christ is being crucified on the cross, the Creator of all things, and He has not only created man, but given him a mouth, and not only given him a mouth, but at that moment is giving him breath to curse Him; that God is actually putting breath in that mouth, causing a voice box to work so that man will curse Him on the cross. It's unimaginable, but it's the same picture within the passage; That God in His grace, God is saying, "Okay, let's see what you would do if My hands were off. You do anything you want to do." What would you do? That's a good question. I mean, all you have to do is ask people, "When you're in a room by yourself, nobody's watching, and you feel completely free, how do you talk? What do you say? What are you thinking? What are you doing?" It's kind of revealing, isn't it? And that's the purpose of the Book of Revelation, to reveal what humanity would do if it had no boundaries. If it had no restraints, what would it do?

So, the passage reads,

"There was given to him a mouth..."

And the next word is “speaking,” which is a skill. So, He says, “I literally gave him something physical, and then on top of that, I gave him the ability to put words and sentences together. The ability for thought and skill in doing that.”

“... a mouth speaking arrogant words...”

Great words. Boastful words. When you have an opportunity to say anything you want to say, who do you talk about? I tell you, one of the most difficult conversations for me to listen to over a long period of time is somebody just talking about how wonderful they are. It just gets really old fast with me. Because really, as great a thing that we may have accomplished, it was all God and all glory should be given to Him. I could talk about God all day long and not get tired. But it's amazing how some people, if left to themselves, what would they talk about? Where do the conversations go? Put people in places of freedom and liberty and see what happens. What happens to the beast is that he begins to speak against or injurious blasphemies, or injurious and hurtful things.

James talks about this in James 3. He says the mouth is a small thing. It's like a rudder in a boat, but it seems to steer great things. And as small as it is, it starts off, but it can set great fires. It can be very destructive. But James goes on to say, "But you know what's strange? That out of the same mouth can come blessings and curses. From one mouth, somebody's blessing, and then maybe behind their back, they're cursing." What are they really thinking? In psychology, of course, they call that Freudian slips. A Freudian slip is when you say what you really meant. You know how people say something terrible about someone, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean that." Or in front of the pastor, they may have cursed, "Oh, I'm sorry, pastor." What they mean is, "You're here. I didn't mean to say it when you were here. That's how I was feeling, but I didn't want you to know how I was feeling. I just wanted to say what you wanted me to say at that particular setting." So, a Freudian slip is the way that man literally thinks within him. That's why Scripture says, you know, as a man thinks, so he is. Scripture says, "Out of the heart, the mouth speaks." And the passage isn't specifically saying that you're going to always say what you're feeling. What it's

saying is you talk long enough and it's going to come out. As Proverbs will say, where there are many words, it's unavoidable that you're going to sin. So, it ultimately is going to come out. You're going to say what you actually mean in your heart. And this is more the point of that particular passage that's given to us, I think it's Matthew 12:34, your conversation is always going to ultimately go to the place that is important to you. Out of the heart, the mouth speaks. A heart is always that picture of the center of your desires. So, you have a desire. You have a love that's centered in your life. You can't help it. Eventually, it's going to come out. You know, you're going to be talking to a car guy, and you might be talking about children and babies, and all of a sudden, he'll equate it to a car. And you'll find yourself in that particular conversation. You'll find yourself in a conversation where a person loves money. And they might start off by talking about all the wonderful things that they might be able to do to help people. But ultimately, they're going to be talking about their investments and the things. And before long, the whole conversation is about money. So, what the passage is saying is, this is what you are. This is

what you'll say. This is what happens. And man in his volatility and his capriciousness creates a sense of anxiety. And he's in a tumultuous world, which breeds a sense of hostility and hatred. So that he finds himself hating, at first, anybody that blocks his protection. But after a while, that hatred takes over and he just hates everybody. It's a strange phenomenon. This is why Scripture says, "Don't let the sun go down on your wrath." A person thinks, "I can get control of my anger. I can hold on to it forever and I'll keep it under control." No, don't let the sun go down on it because you can't control it. Before long, it will control you because the nature of man is to control. And it's that which makes him so anxious and upset and fearful. And it's most of the time out of the fear and anxiety that breeds the anger. People are angry because they're afraid. And this brings the hostility. So, after a while, though, the hatred takes over the fear. And before long, you're just hating.

So, the passage reads, "When I gave him freedom, he speaks out injurious and hurtful words."

Now, watch the next word that is used,

“... and authority...”

See the word there? Underline the word “authority”.

Because you're going to see it here and you're also going to see it in verse 7 as well. And you'll see it in other places as we go. But this particular word is the word “*exousia*” in the Greek. Now, this word means, if I were to just define it as literally as a kid, it's liberty to do whatever you want. That's “*exousia*”. So, you're given the freedom to do what you want, to say what you want, to be who you want. It's complete liberty to do as one pleases. To put it in another vernacular, it's a power of choice. You can choose anything you want.

So, the passage reads,

“... blasphemies, and authority...”

Or the power to do whatever he wants.

“... to act for forty-two months (3 1/2 years) ...”

(Revelation 13:6) “And he opened his mouth...”

Scripture's actually saying, what does he do with his freedom? What does he do with *exousia*? He blasphemes. Once again, he speaks out injurious words with his mouth.

Against who? First, against God. So, it first introduces us to: What is he angry at? Who is he angry at? Who does he hate most? God. And obviously, what it's talking about within that setting is that it's the person Himself of God. Now, it's going to go on to say against his name, against His abiding place, against His family, but it starts off with against God. He's angry with God and he hates God. So, he begins to talk against Him.

And then it says,

“... to blaspheme His name...”

That's to basically hate everything about His character, about His nature. That God proclaims righteousness. Oh, he hates that. So, he talks against that. So, He talks against his name; he talks against His tabernacle, which is literally His dwelling place, which if more accurately described as we read in the Gospel of John is Jesus Himself who tabernacled among us. And He was that wonderful tabernacle that dwelt among us. And in fact, Jesus will say in John 2, “Destroy this temple and I'll raise it up in three days.” So, the great tabernacle of Christ Himself. And the tabernacle was a picture of Christ

Himself. It's not just simply the hostility against Christ, but it's a hostility against the fact that He would come in this world and demonstrate love. And that's one of the reasons why the world is so hostile, because once again, the world is trying to protect themselves. They're trying to guard themselves. You start saying, "You need to trust in God." What are you? You're an assault on their fortifications. What do you think is going to happen? They're going to get angry at you. Try it. You'll find out.

(Revelation 13:5) "There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.

(Revelation 13:6) And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle..."

And last but not least, if you look at the passage,

"... those who dwell (tabernacle) in heaven."

But what the phrase is making reference to is not necessarily those who are in heaven at this time, but those who see heaven as their dwelling place. So, he

begins to rail and to speak against and to speak injuriously and hatefully against those that see heaven as their dwelling place. You wouldn't think that would be something that would be terrible to people. You know, if I said to them, "This isn't my home," you would think, "Okay," but it's an indictment against them. And so, when you say that, there's hostility that grows.

And so, the next passage goes on to say,

(Revelation 13:7) "It was also given to him..."

Once again, this complete freedom, "*exousia*".

"... to make war with the saints..."

Because they embody everything that they hate. And of course, Jesus makes it very clear, "Don't be surprised if they hate you, they hated Me first."

"It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over..."

That's the word "*exousia*," by the way.

"... (freedom) over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him."

Now, the point is that he's going to come in and have this freedom to do what he wants. Nations are going to gravitate towards his way of thinking, or I say "his" as a singular, it's this nation that's gathering, a people that's gathering. When we speak of the church, we speak of the church as in a singular, but it's a people's, the people. So, as He's speaking of the beast, it's the world coming together, for a common purpose, and that is to devour. And the nations begin to now adapt this way of thinking, no different than Hitler coming into Germany, and people began to adapt his way of thinking. And before long, you have common citizens wanting to become part of the war machine. And this is the picture that's being given.

And it says in verse 8,

(Revelation 13:8) "All who dwell on the earth..."

Now, once again, if you look at the end of verse 6, and you look at this particular phrase at the beginning of this text, He uses the word "dwell on the earth," as He did "those who dwell in heaven." And His point is, as we have made heaven our home, they have made earth their home. So, when He uses the phrase, "all who dwell on the

earth,” and all who see earth as their home, is what He’s talking about.

“All who dwell on the earth will worship him...”

All who see earth as their home will worship him. Because what are they thinking? They're thinking “now,” immediate gratification, the things that this world can supply, and that's why they're giving in to them and going along with them, because this is their home. But the reason we're not going along with them is, why? It's not our home, right?

“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.”

Now, those two ideas are actually put together within the passage. One is the Lamb as if slain, and then those who were written in the book of Life. Both those ideas are put together. And if you put them both together, what it's saying is, God had ordained the sacrifice of His Son before the foundation of the world. His love was already in play.

And He knew, as Ephesians 1 would say, those that are His before the foundation of the world.

I like, of course, the Gospel of John in Chapter 10, where it talks about, "I know My sheep. My sheep hear My voice. They come. I'm not going to lose any one of them. They hear My voice. They're going to come." What's interesting is that the passage is going to solidify in our hearts and our minds that that's what keeps us. There is something in us that is innately drawn to the Lamb rather than the beast. I can't fully explain it because here again, naturally, maybe guys would be drawn to some beast of the world, but somewhere inside of us, when we heard that gospel and we heard that Christ died for us, we were drawn more to the Lamb than towards fighting and acrimony and hostility. There was something that drew us away from that. And because of that, we began to embrace this truth. If you would ask me to explain it, the only way I could explain it is that, well, God did it. As Jesus said to Peter, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you. My Father revealed this to you. There's no way that you could have come up with this because it's not your

nature. You're the guy that pulls out the sword." So, it's not the nature of us to think this way.

If you look with me in John 3, which of course is a very favorite and famous passage, you'll see that truth being conveyed within this text. John 3, if you look with me in the passage. You're familiar with verse 16, aren't you, most of you?

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

(John 3:17) For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

(John 3:18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

(John 3:19) This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world..."

What did you do with the Light? Some people ran from it. Others embraced it. Why?

The passage reads this way,

“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

(John 3:20) For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

(John 3:21) But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

That's pretty interesting, isn't it? So, what it's saying is there's something that made me embrace what I knew to be true, while others, there's something inside of them that wanted to repel the truth. You know, you walk up to somebody, “Well, you know that's not faith.” “I don't want to talk about it.” What is that? What is that? Why would you repel the truth? Why would you do that? And what's happening in Chapter 13 is you have all this freedom, and those who have made the earth their home have embraced the beast and the lies that come with

them, and those who have embraced heaven and made that their home have embraced the truth.

Now, the text goes on to say, if you look in verse 9, (Revelation 13:9) “If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”

Which is something we heard Jesus say a number of times in the gospels. So, John is going, “I remember Christ saying this over and over again when He especially wanted you to listen, when He was about to say something that was extremely important.”

So, if you look at the passage, it reads this way,

(Revelation 13:10) “If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; ...”

Now, I want to back up in this phrase, “if anyone is destined for captivity,” because in my Bible, that's kind of italicized words, which means the word really is not in there. It's understood by maybe some of the translators. What's interesting is that the passage actually uses the word where we get the word “synagogue”. And what's interesting about that is it's making reference to gathering people together for captivity. So, the passage

would read this way, “for those that would gather people into captivity, to captivity he goes,”

“... if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed...”

So, it's people bringing people into captivity and people slaying people with a sword.

It then goes on and says this,

“... Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.”

Now, in first reading, you're not really getting a whole lot out of that, because it's just basically saying, you know, you live by the sword, you die by the sword, what Jesus said to His disciples. But it's actually saying more than that. And to me, the emphasis is in the passage that the perception is when all this evil is going around, that God doesn't see it and that justice isn't going to be served. But He's going to establish within this very small sentence that justice will reign. Righteousness will happen. And whether it's by influence, which be the captivity, or the intimidation, which would be the sword, there are going to be people that are doing evil things. The passage then

goes on and says, "This is the perseverance". "*Hypomonē*" is the word that He uses, which means "This is what's going to keep you from being immovable and unswayable in your faith. This is what will cause you to endure in your faith." So, "Here is the perseverance and the endurance that will literally make you immutable in your faith and the faith of the saints." What is that? Well, not only the realization, as we read in Romans 12, that God will bring to justice all the ones that are evil, but more specifically, that through this, trials, saints must come and it proves the legitimacy of their faith. Let me put it in another way. When you're willing to die for your faith, you prove that you have something real. And this is. There's something that is a strength that is not you. It's a strength that is Divine; that takes you all the way to the limit. "And though they slay me," as Job will say, "yet I will trust in Him." There is something in that goes, okay, there's nothing about that makes human sense, which means there has to be a Divine influence. And here is the perseverance of the faith, that it's not you. See, this is the reason why He interjects, "before the foundation of the world." You thought that you're keeping yourself. No,

here's the perseverance of the faith; it has nothing to do with you. It's the power of God in you. I mean, there have been circumstances and situations where, quite frankly, I wanted to get out. I wanted to leave. I didn't want to do it anymore. And I kid you not, I could not move. Now, I could not pat myself on the back for that, because I know that wasn't Gary. That was the Spirit of God saying, "Don't move. You're here to stay." And it's that which brings us, if you think about it, in the time of trials and tribulations, the most comfort; that this isn't me. When the time comes that I have to stand for my faith, if I have what is real, God will endow me with power. This is why He tells His disciples, "You're going to be brought before all kinds of wicked people, and some are going to be leaders and rulers of the world. Don't worry about what to say. At the moment that it happens, I'll tell you what to say." And how amazing that is. I mean, there are times where you're tripping and stumbling over your words, and then finally God puts you in a place in which you're in the most intimidation that you could ever be, and you come out so lucid and so clear, and you go, "Where did that come from?" And you know it was the Lord. But that's the

perseverance of the saints, isn't it? That He knows those who are His before the foundation of the world. He's called us. He's sealed us until the day of redemption. And it's the hope that we have that there is something in us that thinks radically differently than the world. They're attracted to the beast; we're attracted to the Lamb.

And that's why, once again, if you go to Chapter 14, in the very next chapter, look at the picture of the 144,000.

It says,

(Revelation 14:1) “Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name...”

The same name that was being blasphemed.

“... having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.”

Are they ashamed? What is it that keeps them standing on the mount?

(Revelation 14:2) “And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud

thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

(Revelation 14:3) And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

(Revelation 14:4) These are the ones who have not been defiled..."

(Revelation 14:5) "And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

(Revelation 14:6) And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth..."

What a great picture that is of the boldness of those that God had sealed during this time of tribulation. It's sort of like Noah in the ark and God just preserving him, "You're safe. You're safe no matter what floods may come against you." It's an encouraging passage.

And if you look at Revelation 14:12, once again, He uses that same phrase, doesn't He?

(Revelation 14:12) “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.”

There's just nothing that can seem to rock them off of that. And if you were to interview them and ask them, “What is this? How can you do this? Do you do like faith exercises every day?” You know? And they're going to ultimately come up with the same conclusion, “I had nothing to do with this. Though I'm faithless, He remains faithful. He cannot deny Himself, and Christ in me the hope of glory.” This is the perseverance of the faith.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we give You thanks for Your love for us in the midst of this tumultuous world, this world of anxiety and frustration, and ultimate anger and hostility. Lord, this is a place in which man devours man. And he does it so that he can just get more. But he seems to never be satisfied.

And he never seems to be happy. Though he takes his freedom to go after all that he desires, he only seems to create mayhem. It's like a beast that perishes. But Lord, You've planted something different in us, and we hear the voice of the Lamb, as John would cry out, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." And it's strange that we would even be attracted to a lamb so innocuous, so small, so insignificant in the world's view. But it was the lamb that You chose to be the symbol of Your love. And how wonderfully we have embraced it.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, the question is, what would you do if you had freedom? If you could do anything you wanted to do, if you didn't have to worry about the people around you, if you didn't have to worry about what people might think or say, what would you do? Who you are and what you would do in those circumstances is who you really are. And it really displays what decisions you've actually made; who you've chosen to follow. Examine your hearts. Talk to God today.